DARK HORSE COMICS
35 YEARS

#1

THE ORVILLE™

ARTIFACTS
PART 1 OF 2

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THE ORVILLE™

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ARTIFACTS PART 1 OF 2

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OUTPOST 47.

"THERE'S ICE CREAM ALL OVER YOUR FACE."

Blavara's

HORBALAKS MAKE THE BEST ICE CREAM. FOOD SYNTHESIZER DOESN'T DO IT JUSTICE.

NOT A RUMOR.

THERE ARE RUMORS THEY PUT STIMULANTS IN IT.

BRUDIAN MILLINERY

NARVARIAN DINING

RETEPSIAN FASH

MERCER...

XELAYAN TOMES - RARE ANTIQUITIES

PROFESSOR LAMARCHE! MY GOD, IT'S BEEN SO LONG.

YES. PROBABLY YOUR GRADUATION FROM UNION POINT.

YES, YOU REMEMBER GORDON MALLOY?

SECOND HAND BOOKS from XX-XXIVth CENTURIES

I DO NOT.

I SAT NEXT TO ED EVERY DAY IN CLASS.

HMMM, I'M AFRAID I CAN'T RECALL.

YOU ALMOST FAILED ME AND ACCUSED ME OF CHEATING ON THE FINAL EXAM--

SO PROFESSOR, WHAT BRINGS YOU THIS FAR OUT?

I'VE BEEN ON AN EXPEDITION FOR THE PAST FEW YEARS. IT WILL BE OF SOME CONSEQUENCE, TO ANYONE INTERESTED IN ASTROARCHAEOLOGY.

RETEPSIAN FASHIONS

WELL, I'VE TRIED TO KEEP UP WITH MY STUDIES.

YOU HAVE?

YES. WIPE YOUR FACE.

I WOULD LOVE TO HEAR ABOUT IT.

I WILL SEE YOU ABOARD YOUR SHIP IN TWO HOURS.

OH... OKAY, GREAT...

I'LL BE THERE TOO. I'M THE HELMSMAN.

ASSHOLE REMEMBERED ME.

WIPE YOUR FACE.

BREAKFAST

"QUITE A SHIP YOU HAVE HERE..."

...YOU'VE DONE WELL FOR YOURSELF.

WELL, THERE'S ALWAYS SOMEONE DOING A LITTLE BETTER, BUT I CAN'T COMPLAIN. THE QUESTION IS WHAT HAVE YOU BEEN UP TO? YOUR PUBLISHED WORKS HAVE FALLEN OFF IN THE LAST COUPLE OF YEARS.

ALL CAREERS HAVE EBBS AND FLOWS. MINE IS EBBING. SO I DECIDED TO DEVOTE MYSELF TO THE ONE COURSE OF STUDY THAT HAD THE MOST POTENTIAL FOR ME TO LEAVE A MARK.

THE ZANKON?

EXACTLY. AND YOU CAN BE A PART OF IT.

REALLY? HOW?

IF I'M BEING HONEST, RUNNING INTO YOU WAS NOT A COINCIDENCE. I NEED A SHIP TO TAKE ME TO THE CRUXIS SYSTEM, AND YOU'RE THE ONLY STARSHIP CAPTAIN WHO MIGHT CONSIDER IT.

PROFESSOR LAMARCHE...

WHO...?

THIS IS CHALMI, MY ASSISTANT.
HERE IS THE COMSCANNER, PROFESSOR.
WHERE HAVE YOU BEEN? I'VE BEEN WAITING.
I HAD DIFFICULTY FINDING YOU, IT'S SUCH A LARGE SHIP...
VERY WELL. THAT WILL BE ALL, CHALMI.
I'VE NEVER SEEN HER SPECIES BEFORE.
SHE IS FROM SEPHALDA. SHE HAS COME WITH ME TO SEE THE GALAXY. I WILL BE RETURNING HER HOME AFTER I'VE COMPLETED MY EXPEDITION.
ASSUMING OF COURSE YOU WILL TAKE ME TO CRUXIS.
LOOK, PROFESSOR, THAT'S HARDER THAN IT SOUNDS. CRUXIS IS A SYSTEM WITH FOUR STARS, IT'S VERY UNUSUAL. THE MAGNETIC AND GRAVIMETRIC FIELDS MAKE IT IMPOSSIBLE TO NAVIGATE.
YES, I'M AWARE OF THE DIFFICULTIES. HAVE YOUR SCIENCE OFFICER ANALYZE THE DATA ON HERE.
IT WILL BE UP TO YOU TO DETERMINE WHETHER IT'S WORTH THE RISK.

THE DATA ON PROFESSOR LAMARCHE'S COMSCANNER SUPPORTS HIS THEORY OF THE LOCATION OF THE ZANKON FLEET.

CRUXIS SYSTEM

SERIOUSLY?

HOLY CRAP.

YEAH, AMAZING, NO IDEA WHAT THAT IS.

YOU'D KNOW IF YOU'D PAID ATTENTION IN CLASS.

THEORETICAL BORDERS OF THE ZANKON EMPIRE

THE ZANKON WERE PURPORTEDLY THE RULING EMPIRE IN THIS SECTION OF THE GALAXY THREE POINT FOUR MILLION YEARS AGO. THERE IS CIRCUMSTANTIAL EVIDENCE THAT THEY ENSLAVED THIRTY-SEVEN SEPARATE SPECIES, WHO THEN REVOLTED.

CRUXIS SYSTEM

IT IS ACCEPTED AS FACT ON MOCLUS THAT THEY EXISTED.

PLANETARY UNION ORVILLE

WHAT'S THIS ABOUT A FLEET?

IT WAS SCHOLARS ON XELAYA WHO FIRST DISCOVERED THE LEGENDS THAT, WHEN THEIR EMPIRE WAS BEING OVERTHROWN, THE ZANKON HID PART OF THEIR MASSIVE FLEET OF SHIPS, IN THE HOPES OF SEIZING POWER ONCE AGAIN. THE FLEET WAS NEVER FOUND.

SO EVERYBODY KNOWS THIS STORY BUT ME AND JOHN?

I KNEW THE STORY.

WHAT'S LAMARCHE'S EVIDENCE?

THE PROFESSOR HAS CATALOGUED ALL THE INFORMATION AVAILABLE REGARDING THE ZANKON FLEET. HIS MOST COMPELLING CONNECTION IS DERIVED FROM TWO ANCIENT SOURCES...

...THE BORMANIS STONE, WHICH CONTAINS THE FIRST REFERENCE TO THE ZANKON FLEET. IT STATES THAT THE FLEET WAS PROTECTED BY "THE FOUR BROTHERS."

NO SCHOLAR HAD BEEN ABLE TO DETERMINE THE MEANING OF THIS TERM UNTIL THE RECENT ARCHAEOLOGICAL DISCOVERY ON RETEPSIA OF THE TEXT OF AN EPIC POEM, "THE FOUR BROTHERS," CONTEMPORANEOUS TO THE TIME OF THE BORMANIS STONE. THE POEM REFERENCED A CONSTELLATION BY THE SAME NAME.

LAMARCHE STUDIED STAR PATTERNS OF ANCIENT RETEPSIA AND DETERMINED THAT THE FOUR BROTHERS CONSTELLATION WAS IN FACT THE CRUXIS SYSTEM.

IT WOULD BE A GOOD HIDING PLACE.

YEAH, BECAUSE IT'S IMPOSSIBLE TO GET TO.

LIEUTENANT MALLOY IS CORRECT.

FINALLY.

THE UNIQUE GRAVIMETRIC AND MAGNETIC FIELDS CREATED BY THE PROXIMITY OF THESE FOUR STARS HAVE PREVENTED SURVEY VESSELS FROM PROPERLY MAPPING THE INTERIOR OF THE SYSTEM.

WHICH MEANS... THOSE SHIPS COULD STILL BE THERE. EVEN AFTER THREE MILLION YEARS.

ONLY ONE WAY TO FIND OUT.

I'M NOT SURE FOLLOWING PROFESSOR LAMARCHE IS ADVISABLE.

WHY NOT?

LAMARCHE WAS REMOVED FROM HIS POSITION AT UNION POINT BECAUSE OF SOME OVERZEALOUSNESS REGARDING HIS ZANKON THEORIES. HE'S BEEN SHUNNED BY THE UNION SCIENTIFIC COMMUNITY.

ISAAC SEEMS TO THINK, IN THIS CASE, LAMARCHE'S THEORY IS REASONABLE.

THE POSSIBILITY OF FINDING THE FLEET IS TEMPTING, BUT YOU'LL BE PUTTING YOUR SHIP AT A GREAT DEAL OF RISK.

WHO WAS IT WHO SAID, "RISK IS OUR BUSINESS"?

I HAVE NO IDEA.

I'LL APPROVE THE MISSION, ON THE CONDITION THAT YOU WON'T RISK YOUR SHIP AND CREW UNNECESSARILY.

THAT USUALLY GOES WITHOUT SAYING.

REPORT PROGRESS. HALSEY OUT.

NOTIFY LAMARCHE, AND FIND QUARTERS FOR HIM AND HIS... ASSISTANT. THEN HAVE GORDON PLOT A COURSE TO CRUXIS.

YES, SIR.

COMPUTER, DO A SEARCH FOR "RISK IS OUR BUSINESS"...

"HEY, CAN I GIVE YOU A HAND?"

I WANTED TO GET SOMETHING TO EAT, BUT THIS SYNTHESIZER DOESN'T HAVE ANY RECIPES FROM MY HOME PLANET.

WELL, MAYBE I CAN RECOMMEND SOMETHING.

ONE MACARONI AND CHEESE.

IT'S VERY GOOD.

ONE OF MAN'S GREATEST CONTRIBUTIONS TO GALACTIC CULTURE.

SO, CHALMI, WHERE ARE YOU FROM?

IT'S CALLED SEPHALDA. THIS IS THE FIRST TIME I'VE BEEN AWAY FROM HOME. I MISS IT.

WHY DID YOU LEAVE?

WELL, PROFESSOR LAMARCHE CAME THERE, AND HE OFFERED MY PARENTS A FOOD SYNTHESIZER IF THEY WOULD LET ME COME WITH HIM.

IT SOUNDS LIKE... HE BOUGHT YOU.

I DON'T KNOW WHAT YOU MEAN, BUT HE PROMISED ME WE WILL RETURN TO SEPHALDA IMMEDIATELY AFTER WE FIND THE FLEET.

AND IF HE DOESN'T FIND THE FLEET?

HE SEEMED CONFIDENT HE WOULD.

THE GUY IS SCUM. I'VE KNOWN IT SINCE UNION POINT.

BECAUSE HE ALMOST FAILED YOU?

THIS IS NOT A JOKE! HE TRADED HER FOR A FOOD SYNTHESIZER! HE SHOULD BE IN THE BRIG!

HE WAS OFFERING HER A CHANCE TO SEE THE GALAXY. HE PROMISED TO RETURN HER TO HER PARENTS AS SOON AS HE REACHED CRUXIS.

SHE DIDN'T MENTION THAT?

NO... WELL...

YES. SHE MENTIONED THAT. BUT IT STILL SEEMED SKETCHY TO ME.

BRIDGE TO CAPTAIN. WE ARE APPROACHING THE CRUXIS SYSTEM.

ALL RIGHT, BORTUS, ON MY WAY. CALL PROFESSOR LAMARCHE TO THE BRIDGE.

UNLESS GORDON HAS AN OBJECTION.

OH, SHUT UP.

"WE ARE THREE POINT SEVEN AU'S FROM THE OUTER PERIMETER..."

...OUR SENSORS CANNOT PENETRATE TO THE INTERIOR OF THE SYSTEM.

IT'S BEAUTIFUL.

AND DEADLY.

HOW MANY SHIPS TRIED TO CHART THAT MESS?

ACCORDING TO UNION RECORDS, TWELVE MANNED PROBES HAVE UNSUCCESSFULLY ATTEMPTED TO REACH THE INTERIOR OF THE SYSTEM.

SO WE'RE LUCKY THIRTEEN.

CAPTAIN, WE CAN STAY HERE AND CONTEMPLATE ANCIENT SUPERSTITIONS REGARDING NUMBERS OR WE CAN MAKE HISTORY.

YOU'RE RIGHT. WE'LL GIVE IT A SHOT.

HELM, TAKE US IN.

Sergio Aragonés

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"CAPTAIN, READING AN INCREASE IN SOLAR ACTIVITY..."

...IT WOULD APPEAR THE QUANTUM SIGNATURE OF OUR ENGINES IS DRAWING ENERGY FROM THE FOUR STARS IN THIS SYSTEM, CREATING A WEB OF GRAVIMETRIC AND MAGNETIC INTERFERENCE.

WE'RE ACTING LIKE A MAGNET.

ESSENTIALLY CORRECT. GRAVIMETRIC TURBULENCE INCREASING...

COMMANDER...

I SEE IT. ENGINEERING TO BRIDGE, THE GRAVIMETRIC SHEAR COMBINED WITH THE INTENSE MAGNETIC FIELD IS PLAYING HAVOC WITH THE QUANTUM REACTOR...

...WE KEEP THIS UP, WE COULD HAVE A CATASTROPHIC FAILURE.

UNDERSTOOD. ISAAC, HOW LONG TILL WE'RE THROUGH THIS TURBULENCE?

I AM UNABLE TO MAKE THAT DETERMINATION. SENSORS WILL NOT PENETRATE BEHIND THE PERIMETER.

WE HAVE A HULL BREACH ON DECK C.

DAMAGE CONTROL TEAM...

ENGINEERING TO BRIDGE, WE HAVE A NEW PROBLEM...

STRUCTURAL INTEGRITY ON THE UPPER RING IS DEGRADING...

"...IT WON'T HOLD FOR LONG."

CAPTAIN, FORWARD MOMENTUM HAS STOPPED. WE'RE NOT MOVING...

CAN WE INCREASE POWER?

PROBABLY WANT TO CHECK WITH JOHN, BUT I THINK YOU KNOW WHAT HE'S GOING TO SAY...

I THINK I REMEMBER THE ADMIRAL SAYING SOMETHING ABOUT NOT PUTTING THE SHIP IN UNNECESSARY DANGER.

I REMEMBER THAT TOO. GORDON, BACK US OFF...

NO! YOU CAN'T!

LAMARCHE!

WHAT THE HELL?!

WE CAN'T GIVE UP...

"...WE HAVE TO BREAK THROUGH!"

YAPHIT...

I CAN'T STOP IT, WE'RE LOSING EVERYTHING...

ENGINEERING TO BRIDGE! WE HAVE A CATASTROPHIC SYSTEMS FAILURE!

CAPTAIN, THE TURBULENCE HAS STOPPED. WE HAVE MADE IT TO THE INTERIOR OF THE SYSTEM.

WE HAVE ALSO LOST ALL POWER.

GORDON?

I GOT NOTHING...

"...WE'RE DEAD IN SPACE."

ENGINEERING, TRY TO GET US SOME POWER AS SOON AS YOU CAN.

WE'RE WORKING ON IT.

BRIDGE TO SICKBAY, CASUALTY REPORT.

SIXTEEN INJURIES. THREE CONFIRMED DEATHS, THERE MAY BE MORE...

WHAT THE HELL DID YOU THINK YOU WERE DOING?

I'M SORRY... I JUST WANTED TO... I DIDN'T WANT ANYONE TO GET HURT.

A LITTLE LATE.

TAKE HIM TO THE BRIG.

IF YOU'D DONE THAT WHEN I TOLD YOU TO...
SHUT UP.
ISAAC, SENSOR REPORT.
I SHOULD HAVE SENSORS REPAIRED MOMENTARILY.
ENGINEERING TO BRIDGE, AUXILIARY POWER IS ONLINE.
GOOD WORK, JOHN.
HE'S NOT WORKING HERE ALONE, YOU KNOW.
CAPTAIN, I HAVE RESTORED SENSORS.
LET'S SEE WHERE WE ARE.
ACTIVATE MAIN VIEWSCREEN.
FUCK ME...

"...THAT ASSHOLE WAS RIGHT."

THE ZANKON FLEET.

BORTUS, TRY TO RAISE THE ADMIRALTY.

WE ARE UNABLE TO SEND OR RECEIVE WHILE WE ARE IN THIS SYSTEM DUE TO THE INTERFERENCE FROM THE STARS.

BRIDGE TO ENGINEERING, STATUS.

STATUS IS WE'RE NOT GOING ANYWHERE. WE NEED TO BE DOCKED AT A STATION TO FIX THE REACTOR.

THAT DOESN'T LEAVE US WITH MANY OPTIONS.

ONLY ONE I CAN THINK OF...

"...HOPE ONE OF THOSE THREE-MILLION-YEAR-OLD SHIPS STILL WORKS."

TO BE CONTINUED